



Newsletter – September 2018



Charge requests

Rendall and Rittner, the Managing Agent, loaded the budget set by the Directors for 2018-19 on its system but then sent wrong charge statements due on 1st July using the previous year's budget.

It apologised for this error, sent corrected charge requests and undertook further staff training in its accounts team to prevent this happening again.

Direct debits were not affected and the correct amount was collected.

If you paid the wrong amount last quarter because of this error, the 1st October statement with this Newsletter shows a revised amount due allowing for this. Please pay this by 15th October.



Fire brigade inspection

The health & safety consultant made several recommendations on fire safety after the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy and these have been carried out. For example, smoke brushes were fitted to flat communal area fire doors with large gaps and the flat fire emergency plan was updated.

One recommendation was to consider fitting information boxes for the fire brigade. The fire brigade carried out an inspection, but they advised this is not recommended for an Estate with a design like ours. It is more important the fire brigade should be able to find the fire. We are making further small changes to the fire emergency plan and are working to clarify signs.

We are chasing the Council regarding obscured road signs and numbers will be put on or by flat block doors so they can be identified more easily from the street. This will also help deliveries.

The inspector was fully supportive of our work to ensure flat owners do not reduce fire safety.

→ Items in communal areas

Residents of flats may not store anything in the communal areas because of the fire risk and the obstruction of emergency exits. Any items found will be removed without notice and a note left. Removed items not claimed will be disposed of.



Local nuisance

As usual during the summer, local youths have been causing a nuisance on the Estate. Laing Homes was required by the Council to build the Estate with an open design crossed by legal rights of way, so very limited action is possible.

You should call 101, the police non-emergency number, to report nuisance, or the emergency number, 999, if a crime is in progress. While the police will not always attend and police and support officer numbers have been cut, the call is logged and may help prioritise any patrols.

Thank you to those who called the police to attend when one of our fences was vandalised.

There is a particular issue where youths gather out of sight behind 105-135 St Benedicts Close. At the request of an owner in this block, this issue will be raised at the 2018 AGM. Owners in this block will be consulted on paying additional charges to erect fencing if the AGM agrees.



Parking permit holders

The parking control firm provides some permit holders annually, although we get permits printed ourselves to reduce costs. Request one permit holder online only, first-come-first-served, while stocks last, to be delivered to your letterbox. Address: <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/holder>.

→ Flat alterations without consent

If you or a previous owner has carried out any flat alterations without consent beyond routine decoration and like-for-like replacement, you should advise these to Rendall and Rittner.

Flat front and fire doors must have working self-closing mechanisms.

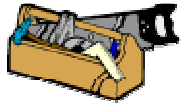
You will have to remedy changes that could cause danger or nuisance at your expense, while others will be granted retrospective consent.

If any undeclared flat alterations reducing safety are discovered, solicitor action will be taken against you at your expense under the lease.





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Maintenance

Following replacement of entryphones, several electrical latch keeps that open the flat block doors have become loose. All the others will now be checked and any that are loose will be fixed securely to make sure doors latch shut securely.

Letterboxes and locks that have been broken will be repaired at the owner's expense.



Tree work

We are awaiting Council consent for work to protected trees. Oak trees along Rectory Lane will have dead wood removed and be cut back where required, to the extent permitted.

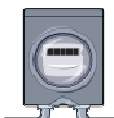
A few small trees not cut back last year will also be pruned where now needed and some self-seeded trees that appear dead will be removed.



Pest survey

Residents in 1-71 St Benedicts Close are asked to complete an online survey to report any pests seen this year, in 2018. This will show if a larger trial of metal grilles over flat block air bricks has been successful. The first gave mixed results. Address: <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/pests>.

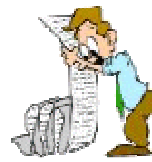
Owners of other blocks will then be consulted on paying extra charges to fit air brick grilles.



Electricity meters

We advised last year that you should not allow electricity suppliers to fit old, so-called smart meters. These are an old type which stops submitting readings if you change supplier!

You do **not** have to have one fitted and are advised to wait for an SMETS 2 smart meter, which does operate with different suppliers. The Government has now delayed these to 2019.



Work this year

The Directors and Managing Agent have carried out and arranged an even larger amount of work for owners and residents this year than usual:

- 5-yearly landlord electrical testing was carried out after a tender and resulting remedial work was also carried out.
- Work recommended by the health and safety consultant was carried out and further fire safety advice was taken from the Fire Brigade in the context of the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy (see separate article).
- The privacy policy, website and relevant contractor terms were updated for GDPR.
- The Directors dealt with several cases where inconsiderate flat owners were placing the safety and well-being of others at risk.
- Major repair work was carried out under one flat block where the sewer pipe had broken.
- Other sewers were cleared as necessary.
- Three major flat block roof repairs were carried out where water was leaking.
- The final original life-expired flat entryphone systems were replaced with new units.
- Air brick grilles were fitted to a second flat block to try to reduce pest entry, followed by another survey (see separate article). Soffit grilles were also fitted to one block.
- Pest work has been carried out as needed, including spraying bins to reduce maggots.
- Inoperative flat letterbox locks were replaced.
- Tree work was arranged on a regular 5-year cycle for the oak trees on Rectory Lane along with some other work to small trees.
- Faulty security lights were replaced, including fitting an LED flood light that we are testing.
- The Council was contacted on road signs.

→ Annual meeting

As usual, we are looking to hold the St Benedicts Annual General Meeting locally in mid to late November. When the date is set, this will be shown on the website and formal notices will be posted to all shareholders (property owners).